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# THE SOCIAL NETWORKS OF SOUTH ASIAN MIGRANTS IN THE SHEFFIELD AREA DURING THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY\*

## I

### INTRODUCTION

On 12 March 1931, in the Yorkshire city of Sheffield, Gisalic Amidulla, or simply ‘Ali’ to friends and family, died at his post as a boiler firer at the vast Brown Bayley steelworks.<sup>1</sup> The post-mortem examination identified the cause of death as a major heart attack.<sup>2</sup> Ali was just 37 years old and his family harboured few doubts that the dust, heat and physical intensity he experienced throughout his working life contributed to his early demise.<sup>3</sup> With his countryman and fellow Pashtun Warris Khan officiating as imam, Ali was laid to rest in consecrated ground four days later in the city’s Burngreave cemetery alongside the graves of

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<sup>1</sup> Sheffield was, and remains, one of the United Kingdom’s largest cities. According to the 1931 Census its population was 511,742.

<sup>2</sup> Gisalic Amidulla, death certificate (hereafter d. cert.): General Register Office, Southport (hereafter GRO), Deaths, Sheffield, Jan.–Mar. 1931, vol. 9c, p. 842. The names of many of the individuals in this study vary in spelling across a range of official documentation, including census returns and birth, marriage and death certificates. I spell personal names as they appear on the relevant certificate. See also nn. 66 and 85.

<sup>3</sup> Correspondence with the family of Ali Amidulla, 27 Feb. 2013.

three fellow Muslims.<sup>4</sup> He was survived by his wife, Maggie (née Windle), and their three children.<sup>5</sup> At the time of her husband's death, Maggie was pregnant with their fourth child. The grieving widow named the boy, born in June, Gisalic, later Anglicized to Alic, in memory of her late husband.<sup>6</sup> Although we do not know exactly when Ali and Maggie first met (most likely around the end of the First World War), we do know that they married in March 1920. Their marriage certificate shows they chose a Church of England ceremony at Christ Church, Attercliffe, in preference to the secular wedding offered by the city's register office. The certificate also shows that the couple gave a shared address to the parish priest: Maggie's family home just round the corner from the Brown Bayley steelworks.<sup>7</sup> The death of Maggie's father in 1906 appears to have necessitated her mother's decision to take in lodgers. The census return for 1911 shows her mother, Charity, accommodating herself, her three daughters and three lodgers: a tailoress, a coal miner and a steelworker.<sup>8</sup> That the Windle family home became a small boarding house makes it a distinct possibility that nine

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<sup>4</sup> Ali Amidullah, burial record, at

<[http://sheffieldindexers.com/BurialRecordsSearch.php?place\\_death=7%20Ravencar%20Rd%2C%20Manor%20Estate&forename=&surname=&current\\_page=1%22](http://sheffieldindexers.com/BurialRecordsSearch.php?place_death=7%20Ravencar%20Rd%2C%20Manor%20Estate&forename=&surname=&current_page=1%22)> (accessed 21 Feb. 2017).

~~The three other grave markers surrounding Ali's grave are those of Alof Din, also known as Alabdin Khan (d. 1927), Sultan Mohomed (d. 1923) and Souriya Khan (d. 1929).~~

<sup>5</sup> Amidulla children, birth certificates (hereafter b. cert(s)): GRO, Births, Sheffield, July–Sept. 1922, vol. 9c, p. 1148; July–Sept. 1924, vol. 9c, p. 1085; Oct.–Dec. 1927, vol. 9c, p. 786.

<sup>6</sup> Gisalic Amidulla, b. cert.: GRO, Births, Sheffield, Apr.–June 1931, vol. 9c, p. 936.

<sup>7</sup> Gisalic Amidulla and Maggie Windle, marriage certificate (hereafter m. cert.): GRO, Marriages, Sheffield, Jan.–Mar. 1920, vol. 9c, p. 787.

<sup>8</sup> The National Archives, Kew (hereafter TNA), Census Returns for England and Wales 1911, class RG 14/28005, 27 Eadon Road, Sheffield.

years later Ali, the young South Asian migrant, was himself the Windles' lodger when Maggie formed her attachment to him. If this was the case, it would reflect the experience of a number of other native–newcomer couples in this study.

By the time of Ali's death eleven years later, the growing Amidulla family had taken up residence on Sheffield's Manor Estate, a progressive social housing development built by the city as part of its extensive plans for modernization and slum clearance.<sup>9</sup> George Orwell, visiting the 'the Manor' while researching *The Road to Wigan Pier*, described the new development as comprising 'superior housing' but only available to those with steady weekly incomes in excess of £3.<sup>10</sup> Ali's income as a boiler firer was therefore sufficient to enable his family to move up the Pennine hillside, away from one of Britain's most industrially polluted areas, to reside in the clean air of this new municipal suburbia.<sup>11</sup> The 1939 Register shows Maggie's return, with her children, to her mother's home in the years after her husband's death. Her son James followed in his steelworker father's footsteps as an apprentice furnaceman, perhaps at the same Brown Bayley works which dominated the neighbourhood.<sup>12</sup> However, she does not appear to have been socially isolated on 'the Manor' as the wife of an South Asian migrant. Her presence as a witness on the marriage certificate

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<sup>9</sup> Gisalic Amidulla, d. cert.

<sup>10</sup> George Orwell, 'Notes and Narrative on Population, Health, Employment, Housing, Miners in Wigan, Barnsley and Sheffield, 1935–1936', 39–40: University College London, Special Collections.

<sup>11</sup> Sir Napier Shaw and John Switzer Owens, *The Smoke Problem of Great Cities* (London, 1925), 90–1.

<sup>12</sup> TNA, 1939 Register, Amidulla household, Sheffield, RG 101/3552F/019/21-KISJ.

of another, similarly mixed, couple reveals men and women linked by a growing web of relationships between Sheffield natives and South Asian newcomers.<sup>13</sup>

Ali's grave lies among a number of other Muslim burials, all dating from the inter-war period.<sup>14</sup> Each of the adult markers are inscribed as commemorating an 'Indian Mohammedan'. Additionally, an infant's grave is marked as belonging to a member of the 'Mohammedan religion'. Despite the graves' somewhat neglected condition today, they lie in a superb and airy position in consecrated Christian ground on a hillside above the city. Their stone markers are simple but have been thoughtfully conceived and executed. The graves and the associated burial records demonstrate that those who arranged the funerals were prepared to go to the time and expense to ensure that these individuals were laid to rest with ceremony and dignity. In short, these graves do not appear to be of marginalized individuals who met their fate among strangers, thousands of miles from home. On the contrary, they show that these people died among those who cared for them, who had an understanding of their traditions and what was important to them. The grave of particular interest is that of the infant Souriya Khan. Not only does the stone marker's epitaph demonstrate the love of a couple for

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<sup>13</sup> Willy Khan and Hilda Johnson, m. cert.: GRO, Marriages, Sheffield, July–Sept. 1927, vol. 9c, p. 1155.

<sup>14</sup> The graves in Burngreave cemetery, Sheffield, belong to Sultan Mohomed, also known as Sultan Mohammed, a colliery surface labourer (d. 16 July 1923), age 32; Souriya Khan (b. 1928, d. 30 July 1929), age 9 months; Ali Amidullah, also known as Gisalic or Ali Amidulla, a steelworks boiler firer (b. 1894, d. 12 Mar. 1931), age 37; Alof Din, also known as Alabdin Khan, a steelworks boiler firer (d. 15 Feb. 1927), age 35 or 40.

their child, but it opens up further perspectives onto the life, as well as the death, of the child commemorated.<sup>15</sup>

Notwithstanding the presence of these inter-war Muslim burials lying in an inland city, historians and social anthropologists have asserted that few non-white migrants lived outside a small number of British home ports. The majority of South Asian migrants, especially those who inhabited a working-class milieu, have been described largely as sojourners rather than settlers and their occupations confined to either seafaring or peddling fabrics and small wares.<sup>16</sup> Nevertheless, despite current historiography, my study of South Asian migrants in the Sheffield area from about 1916 to 1947 contends that identifying them as temporary visitors with peripatetic lifestyles, isolated from wider British society, neglects both inland migration and settlement and the many relationships formed with the natives of Britain, especially through marriage. I argue here that the native–newcomer relationships in question were formed in a period bounded at its beginning by the empire-wide labour mobilizations of the First World War. And, by acting as settlement ‘bridgeheads’, these mixed family households played a key role in facilitating chains or networks of migration from the Indian subcontinent to the imperial metropole.<sup>17</sup> These networks developed and

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<sup>15</sup> ‘In loving memory of Souriya, beloved daughter of Ayaht and Hilda Khan, died July 30th 1929 aged 9 months (Mohammedan religion)’.

<sup>16</sup> For example, Rozina Visram, *Asians in Britain: Four Hundred Years of History* (London, 2002), 254–9; Dilip Hiro, *Black British, White British: A History of Race Relations in Britain* (London, 1991), 110–11; Panikos Panayi, *An Immigration History of Britain: Multicultural Racism since 1800* (Harlow, 2010), 24.

<sup>17</sup> John S. MacDonald and Leatrice D. MacDonald, ‘Chain Migration, Ethnic Neighborhood Formation and Social Networks’, *Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly*, xlii (1964), 84–8. Roger

spanned beyond the inter-war period into the era of mass migration associated with the passing of the British Nationality Act 1948.<sup>18</sup> This phenomenon occurred across England, Scotland and Wales, both in the ports and here, as described in this article, inland, away from maritime employment. Men like Ali Amidulla travelled some nine thousand miles by land and sea from rural districts in the Indus river basin of northern Punjab and the North West Frontier Province, and later from Kashmir and the Aden Protectorate.<sup>19</sup> Their eventual destination was Britain's heavy-industrial heartland around the Don valley, in Yorkshire's old West Riding.<sup>20</sup> A number settled with their native British wives or partners to raise families while working in and among the foundries, rolling mills and collieries of the area. These pioneers and their wives also formed bridgeheads and hosted the arrival to the area of other migrants, mostly fellow South Asian Muslims.

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Ballard's term 'bridgehead' referred to the earliest settlements of South Asians in British home ports: Roger Ballard, 'Introduction: The Emergence of Desh Pardesh', in Roger Ballard (ed.), *Desh Pardesh: The South Asian Experience in Britain* (London, 1994), 7.

<sup>18</sup> Ballard, 'Introduction', 11.

<sup>19</sup> The first Kashmiri has been identified by Choudry Walayat as Karam Dad, who arrived in the city from Mirpur in the late 1930s: Choudry Mohammed Walayat, *Made in England: The Memoirs of Dr Choudry Mohammed Walayat MBE* (Sheffield, 2008), 56. Men identified by the University of Sheffield's Imam Sheik Mohammad Ismail as having names likely of Yemeni origin begin to appear in the GRO records during the Second World War.

<sup>20</sup> The river Don is central to the South Yorkshire region. Much of the conurbation's heavy industry is situated on its banks and valley sides. The Don flows through Sheffield, Rotherham and Doncaster. The industrial towns of Chesterfield and Barnsley are also nearby. The large majority of the migrants lived in Sheffield, but others were spread across the area.

This article represents the first study of non-white migration to the Sheffield area in the period before the mass migration of the post-1948 era. I concentrate here on migrants with names of Muslim, Sikh and Hindu heritage who worked or married in the Sheffield area. The data includes evidence for the presence of a substantial cohort of approximately 338 men, women and children.<sup>21</sup> A large majority of the cohort inhabited a working-class milieu and have been located primarily by means of the records of births, marriages and deaths of the General Register Office (GRO), the burgess (electoral) rolls for key districts of Sheffield and the 1939 Register (released in 2015).<sup>22</sup> Of these, the great majority of the men had Muslim names and the children a Muslim component to theirs.

The next section opens with a brief discussion of the methodology of this research and the merits of an alternative approach to migration historiography. It briefly highlights the pitfalls of relying heavily on hostile source data and the benefits of a more sanguine, humanist approach to migration history by identifying previously hidden relations between natives and newcomers in the past. Section III explores the literal and metaphorical journeys of migrant men in the Sheffield area through the world of work. It examines how and why these men, mostly sons of peasant farmers, arrived in Britain, and their entrance into its labour market. An exploration of the men's creative employment strategies contextualizes the study and the arrival of the men in Britain. Section IV examines the migrants' alliances through marriage, the influence of these unions in transforming sojourners into settlers, and

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<sup>21</sup> Currently the Sheffield cohort comprises approximately 148 male migrants, 79 women and 111 children.

<sup>22</sup> See David Holland, 'The 1939 Register: <http://www.findmypast.co.uk/1939>', Online Archive Review, *Twentieth Century British History*, xxvii, 4 (2016), doi: 10.1093/tcbh/hww024.



the key role these bridgeheads played in the further migration of kin to Britain. Section V explores the reception of the migrants within the working-class neighbourhoods of the Sheffield area. It also assesses the nature and extent of integration and tolerance towards perceived racial and cultural difference.

## <h1>II

### AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO MIGRATION HISTORIOGRAPHY</h1>

My research is informed by Laura Tabili's pioneering historical study of migration and settlement in South Shields between 1841 and 1939, *Global Migrants, Local Culture*.<sup>23</sup> Her humanist approach, while fully recognizing the conflict that periodically ruptured relations between natives and newcomers in a number of British home ports, avoids defining the period in question, and the subjects of her study, entirely by this sporadic phenomenon. Tabili cautions against viewing British people as 'monolithic' in their outlook and attitudes towards perceived differences of skin colour or culture in their midst. 'Stressing barriers between rather than dialogue among British cultures and peoples', she observes, 'has isolated migrants analytically from British society and history'.<sup>24</sup> In other words, the subjects of migration history should be studied as constituent members of the communities they joined. And that research should not be informed by a priori reasoning that relationships between natives and newcomers should be characterized as fraught with hostility and suspicion or that natives be essentialized as natural and inevitable supporters of racist ideology. However, the historiography of migration to Britain has strongly tended towards a conflict-centred

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<sup>23</sup> Laura Tabili, *Global Migrants, Local Culture: Natives and Newcomers in Provincial England, 1841–1939* (Basingstoke, 2011).

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

approach to investigating relations between natives and newcomers. Historians have thus placed much emphasis on the phenomena of popular anti-migrant riots and official harassment of groups, families and individuals.<sup>25</sup> Without doubt, this critical historiography is of importance in highlighting British imperialism's domestic turn when, upon the arrival of visible numbers of non-white migrants, the supporters of imperialism attempted to inject the social relations of the colonies into domestic politics.<sup>26</sup> Radical voices such as Peter Fryer, Dilip Hiro and Paul Gilroy actively contested self-satisfied and disingenuous narratives of natural 'British tolerance' and 'fair play' amid the increasingly virulent racism of the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>27</sup> For some, however, the picture remains unrelentingly bleak. In 2010 Panikos Panayi described the 'iron girder of racism and xenophobia' that has underpinned British life for the past two hundred years.<sup>28</sup> Thus, in the much-needed process of critically exploring the historical instances of racism that greeted migration and settlement, everyday instances in

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<sup>25</sup> For example, Peter Fryer, *Staying Power: The History of Black People in Britain* (London, 1984), 298–301; Panikos Panayi, 'Middlesbrough 1961: A British Race Riot of the 1960s?', *Social History*, xvi (1991); Jacqueline Jenkinson, *Black 1919: Riots, Racism and Resistance in Imperial Britain* (Liverpool, 2009).

<sup>26</sup> Perhaps the best example is the home secretary Joynson Hicks's introduction of the Special Restriction (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order 1925: see Tony Lane, 'The Political Imperatives of Bureaucracy and Empire: The Case of the Coloured Alien Seamen Order, 1925', *Immigrants and Minorities*, xiii, 2–3 (1994).

<sup>27</sup> Peter Fraser, 'Peter Fryer (1927–2006): An Appreciation', *Immigrants and Minorities*, xxvii, 1 (2009), doi: 10.1080/02619280902896304; Hiro, *Black British, White British*, pt 3, ch. 1; Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation* (London, 2002), 129–32.

<sup>28</sup> Panayi, *Immigration History of Britain*, 26.

which natives and newcomers successfully lived, worked, married and cooperated have, perhaps necessarily, been neglected. Nevertheless, a continuing over-reliance on hostile sources of evidence, such as press reports and Home Office archives, rather than the incorporation of more quotidian and elusive evidence of tolerance, cooperation and dialogue between natives and newcomers, may mean that important nuance and detail, not to mention other historical interpretations, are lost. Generally speaking, press or civil service reports of the period did not deem quiet, mutually negotiated integration worthy of comment. This is perhaps the reason why instances of informal, everyday tolerance, sociability and mutuality between newcomers and the white working-class natives they most frequently lived among have gone unnoticed by historians for so many years.

The evidence presented by my study raises many questions about the assumptions made today about the attitudes to ‘race’ and difference among ordinary people in the past. As a means of answering these questions, my study has attempted to situate native–newcomer couples firmly within their original, usually working-class, milieu, aiming to fill some of the many lacunae existing within current historical narratives and analysis. Following Tabili’s lead, I have conducted the research without the assumption that racial conflict is the inevitable default position in relations between natives and newcomers. Rather, the research concentrates primarily on those close personal interactions between natives and newcomers that left their mark in the official record, such as their marriages, their domestic arrangements and the births of their children. The quantity of fresh data revealed by this more sanguine approach to migration history reveals not only its potential, but also the centrality of native–newcomer relations to early non-white settlement in Britain.

However, this is not a historical study of a ‘community’ in the sense of a culturally homogeneous, relatively endogamous and geographically contained population such as the Jewish inhabitants of the Rothschild Buildings in the East End of London. Central to my

study are many examples of the apparent willingness of natives and newcomers to enter into exogamous marriages beyond boundaries of geography and ethnicity. Nevertheless, it takes inspiration from Jerry White's painstaking reconstruction of life in the Rothschild Buildings through its remarkable combination of both documentary sources and oral testimony.<sup>29</sup> The GRO data used in my study has also been supplemented by oral testimony kindly supplied by the sons, daughters and grandchildren of a small number of the native–newcomer couples. This has provided much of the human texture often absent from empirical data. Like White, I am attempting to reconstruct ordinary lives historically, not in isolation but by situating them within the context of a broader working-class experience.<sup>30</sup>

This article necessarily uses the concept of the social network loosely. Its nodes and actors are those families and individuals who hosted newcomers, facilitating their migration, integration or settlement. As discussed above, the networks were not within a bounded community, but were open and exogamous, bringing new members, both native and newcomer, within their ambit through relationships of marriage, friendship and mutuality. The incompleteness of the surviving data means that only snapshots of the nodes on the network can be glimpsed, and the 1939 Register and the burgess rolls for 1945 are two such points in time. But, despite the fragmentary nature of documents, memories and artefacts, Matt Houlbrook has successfully demonstrated that an understanding, if not necessarily the

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<sup>29</sup> Jerry White, *Rothschild Buildings: Life in an East End Tenement Block, 1887–1920* (London, 1980).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. xiv–xv.

precise detail, of historical social networks and the actors that constituted them can be recovered from these ‘accumulated historical traces’.<sup>31</sup>

### <h1>III

#### PEASANT, PROLETARIAN, PEDLAR, ENTREPRENEUR</h1>

As a boiler firer, Ali Amidulla was one of the hundreds of men who maintained the constant head of steam needed to power the Sheffield area’s massive steelworking industries. Like most other non-white workers arriving in Britain, he would originally have been recruited to the ‘black gang’ aboard a British merchant steamship as ship’s fireman or coal trimmer.<sup>32</sup> Although the term ‘black gang’ was not primarily intended as a racial epithet (equally applying to white stokehold crews), as a South Asian Ali would have been recruited under the highly racialized ‘lascar’ or ‘Asiatic’ articles of employment codified in the Merchant Shipping Act 1894. Despite the ruthless exploitation of lascar seafarers, British reliance on cheap colonized labour unwittingly established a dialectic process. Within this worldwide network British merchant shipping provided men of very limited means the opportunity to improve their lot. Rather than succumbing to a role ascribed to them by British imperialism, some lascar seafarers, like Ali and many of the men in this study, used the merchant marine as their means of escape from its clutches into the labour markets of the West.<sup>33</sup> Moreover,

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<sup>31</sup> Matt Houlbrook, *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918–1957* (Chicago, 2005), 4–6.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Black gang’ was a universal term for the stokehold crew, who were almost always coated in coal dust while at work: see Edward Carpenter, ‘The Black Gang’, in *The Seaman’s World: Merchant Seamen’s Reminiscences*, ed. Ronald Hope (London, 1982).

<sup>33</sup> Dada Amir Haider Khan, *Chains to Lose: Life and Struggles of a Revolutionary*, ed. Hasan N. Gardezi (Karachi, 2007), 135–48.

shovelling coal into the fireboxes of steamships proved invaluable heavy-industrial experience for the men, many of whom were sons of smallholding peasant farmers.<sup>34</sup> In the period of economic uncertainty following the First World War, the experience of maritime industrial labour may have proved the crucial factor enabling South Asian seafarers to exercise their rights as British subjects and gain shore-based employment. That opportunities for work existed at the same wage rates as those of their white counterparts, both on board ship and on land, was a major incentive for men to forfeit their accumulated lascar's pay by deserting in imperial British, European and North American ports.

Throughout their working lives many of the men appear to have moved fluidly between the roles of peasant farmer, merchant seaman, proletarian, pedlar and petty entrepreneur. This fluidity was contingent not only on external social and material factors, but also on their own terms as an expression of their subjectivity and their own individual sense of agency. While a degree of this economic creativity can be identified as a response to British attempts to exclude South Asians structurally from mainstream maritime labour, the migrant's 'myth of return' also played a substantial role in the men's outlook. This social narrative described a migrant's plan to work abroad for five years or so — long enough to accumulate enough money to purchase more land or to enhance the productivity and status of their family's agricultural smallholdings.<sup>35</sup> On achieving this goal, the migrant would return home, replaced in his overseas work by one or more kinsmen, thus maintaining the chain of

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<sup>34</sup> GRO, Marriages, Sheffield, Jan. 1916–Dec. 1947.

<sup>35</sup> Muhammad Anwar, *The Myth of Return: Pakistanis in Britain* (London, 1979), 20–1; Badr Dahya, 'The Nature of Pakistani Ethnicity in Industrial Cities in Britain', in Abner Cohen (ed.), *Urban Ethnicity* (London, 1974), 83.

sojourners providing remittances to their family or biradari (clan or extended kinship group).<sup>36</sup> Indeed, the narrative of ‘just for five years’ was the wistful refrain in Mohammed Iqbal, Safuran Ara and Rachel van Riel’s collection of interviews conducted in 1994 with elderly Pakistani settlers who had come to Sheffield in the 1950s and 1960s to work in its steel industry. Although these later arrivals were all fare-paying passengers, there is a clear similarity between the remembered aspirations and motivations of Iqbal’s subjects and those of the inter-war seafarers-turned-settlers interviewed by Caroline Adams in the 1980s.<sup>37</sup>

When some of the earliest pioneer settlers left the ports in search of employment in the Sheffield area, the majority were, like those who came later, engaged in distinctly proletarian activity. The marriage certificates of the men who married British natives provide an insight into their lives, including their occupations. Of the fifty-nine couples for whom we have marriage certificates, twelve grooms were employed as boiler firers in steelworks and factories in Sheffield and Rotherham. Another seventeen were employed in various occupations including steelworks labourer, furnaceman, machinist, gauge maker, galvanizer, steel cutter and seaman.<sup>38</sup> While migration historiography generally defines inland migrants as primarily occupied in peddling, only seven of the grooms self-identified as being involved

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<sup>36</sup> MacDonald and MacDonald, ‘Chain Migration, Ethnic Neighborhood Formation and Social Networks’, 82–3; Ballard, ‘Introduction’, 11.

<sup>37</sup> *Just for Five Years? Reminiscences of Pakistani Senior Citizens in Sheffield*, ed. Mohammed Iqbal, Safuran Ara and Rachel van Riel (Sheffield, 1990); *Across Seven Seas and Thirteen Rivers: Life Stories of Pioneer Sylheti Settlers in Britain*, ed. Caroline Adams (London, 1987).

<sup>38</sup> GRO, Marriages, Sheffield, Jan. 1916–Dec. 1947.

in itinerant occupations such as ‘general hawker’ or ‘draper’s traveller’.<sup>39</sup> The remaining eighteen grooms and one bride belonged to higher social strata engaged in occupations such as medicine and civil engineering, as well as eight Indian and Egyptian students at the University of Sheffield.<sup>40</sup> The 1939 Register for the Sheffield area provides details of at least another thirty-six men, of whom the majority were Muslims engaged in manual trades. Two of the Muslim men are recorded as variety artistes, and two more as cooks. Ten individuals have Sikh names, including one of three women migrants in the study: the wife of one of a household of Sikh men, engaged in ‘unpaid domestic duties’.<sup>41</sup> A number of the Sikh men in the Sheffield area, as in Yorkshire as a whole, were involved in the peddling of drapery and small wares as typically characterized by migration historiography.<sup>42</sup> However, seventeen of the forty Sikh men recorded by the Yorkshire section of the 1939 Register were employed in

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<sup>39</sup> For example, Rasool Khan and Elsie Peters, m. cert.: GRO, Marriages, Sheffield, Apr.–June 1928, vol. 9c, p. 1395; Mohammad Ali and Phyllis Pearson, m. cert.: GRO, Marriages, Rotherham, Apr.–June 1935, vol. 9c, p. 1765.

<sup>40</sup> GRO, Marriages, Sheffield, Jan. 1916–Dec. 1947, including Mohammed Afzal Khan and Gretchen Sawyer, July–Sept. 1933, vol. 9c, p. 1091; Mahmood Abdel Hamid and Margaret Taylor, Jan.–Mar. 1942, vol. 9c, p. 1433.

<sup>41</sup> Her name was Bachan Kaur: TNA, 1939 Register, Kapson household, Sheffield, RG 101/3588C/018/25-KKDC. The other two women were Haidri Lakshmi Nalliah, a university student who married James Hall in 1946, and Marjorie S. Singh, who married Arthur Andrews in 1930.

<sup>42</sup> Roger Ballard, ‘Family Organisation among the Sikhs in Britain’, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, ii, 1 (1972), 12; Sewa Singh Kalsi, *The Evolution of a Sikh Community in Britain: Religious and Social Change among the Sikhs of Leeds and Bradford* (Leeds, 1992), 61–2; Gurharpal Singh and Darshan Singh Tatla, *Sikhs in Britain: The Making of a Community* (London, 2006), 47–9.



manual trades and were present in many of the county's major towns, including York, Huddersfield, Leeds, Bradford and Barnsley.<sup>43</sup> It is also worth noting that, unlike many of their Muslim counterparts, non-elite Sikh migrants travelled as fare-paying passengers sponsored by their kin.<sup>44</sup>

Of those individuals who died in the Sheffield area during the period covered in this article, death certificates also reveal their religious backgrounds and occupations. Apart from a Hindu medical practitioner and his young son, all have Muslim names. In addition to eight children of Muslim migrants we have four boiler firers and nine steelworkers and general labourers.<sup>45</sup> Also present is Abdul Jehela, a former merchant seaman who married Violet Mitchell in Cardiff in 1943 and moved to Sheffield. At the time of his death from pulmonary

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<sup>43</sup> TNA, 1939 Register, Singh household, Barnsley, RG 101/3320J/005/37-KAAR; Mohamed household, Leeds, RG 101/3431B/016/4-KGCD; Haynes household, Leeds, RG 101/3432H/006/20-KGCQ; Lal household, Bradford, RG 101/3332I/005/4-KBBR; Singh household, Huddersfield, RG 101/3411K/004/4-KFFE; Singh household, Huddersfield, RG 101/3411I/003/5-KFFC; Singh household, York, RG 101/3903G/021/14-KZNS.

<sup>44</sup> Roger Ballard, 'The Sikhs: The Development of South Asian Settlements in Britain', in James L. Watson (ed.), *Between Two Cultures: Migrants and Minorities in Britain* (Oxford, 1977), 29; Singh and Tatla, *Sikhs in Britain*, 48.

<sup>45</sup> GRO, Deaths, Sheffield, Jan. 1916–Dec. 1947, including Alabdin Khan, Jan.–Mar. 1927, vol. 9c, p. 859; Gisalic Amidulla, Jan.–Mar. 1931, vol. 9c, p. 842; Rahmat Ullah, July–Sept. 1943, vol. 9e, p. 503; Surwar Khan, Jan.–Mar. 1944, vol. 9c, p. 618; Karim Dad Khan, Oct.–Dec. 1944, vol. 9c, p. 332.

tuberculosis he was recorded as a market stallholder, clearly indicating a move away from the sea and settlement into land-based self-employment.<sup>46</sup>

Sojourning men (probably the majority of South Asians and Muslims in Sheffield) who, by neither marrying, fathering children nor dying in the area, left very little record are much more elusive and difficult to quantify. There are, however, names of men recorded as witnesses at the marriages of their friends, such as Kushal Khan, whose name only appears on the marriage certificate of Noah Mahammed and Lucy Gomer.<sup>47</sup> Additionally, local press reports provide brief glimpses of these men and the process of inland migration towards more settled, non-maritime employment. From this evidence, and from the numbers of marriages discovered by this study, it can be reasonably inferred that there were many South Asian migrants sojourning in the area who did not marry in Britain. Local newspaper reports from criminal and coroner's court hearings detail various incidents involving South Asians. For example, in May 1918 three men, Shekh Aboo, Yah Mohamed and another unnamed 'coloured man', were working at Sheffield's Grimethorpe gasworks.<sup>48</sup> Shekh Aboo previously worked as an oil mill labourer in Leeds, where, in 1917, he married Agnes, his English wife.<sup>49</sup> The report describes Agnes's attempt to act as a translator between the court and her husband, who had been assaulted by his South Asian workmate. In 1919 a charge of

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<sup>46</sup> Abdul Jehela and Violet Mitchell, m. cert.: GRO, Marriages, Cardiff, Apr.–June 1943, vol. 11a, p. 859; Abdul Jehela, d. cert.: GRO, Deaths, Sheffield, Sept. 1945, vol. 9c, p. 485.

<sup>47</sup> GRO, Marriages, Sheffield, Apr.–June 1920, vol. 9c, p. 1686.

<sup>48</sup> Sheffield Evening Telegraph, 2 May 1918, 3.

<sup>49</sup> Shekh Aboo and Agnes Robertson, m. cert.: GRO, Marriages, Leeds, Apr.–June 1917, vol. 9b, p. 599.

the theft of money from Maharamed Sha by Noorden Khan, ‘a native of Peshawar’, was reported.<sup>50</sup> Apparently, Khan and Sha worked on the same ship before docking in England in December 1918. On arrival they moved inland, taking up shared lodgings in Rotherham and employment at the local steelmaker Steel, Peech and Tozer. Again, aside from the criminal proceedings, this incident shows the process whereby South Asians were originally recruited as lascar seafarers and, on docking in Britain, decided to try their luck inland. In the case of Sultan Mohammed, a Sheffield colliery worker with a wife and children in the Punjabi district of Chhachh, his presence was indicated by his grave marker among the same group of Muslim burials as Ali Amidulla.<sup>51</sup> Additionally, his death certificate, press reports and records of compensation paid to his family following his accidental death at work reveal the relationship between his working life in Sheffield and his family life in India. At the inquest into Sultan’s death, his workmates described how he regularly sent money to his wife and two boys in India.<sup>52</sup> Sultan and his compatriots, like the Rochdale-based Pakistani migrants of the 1950s and 1960s described by Muhammad Anwar and Mohammed Iqbal, may have planned to work in Britain for five years or so.<sup>53</sup> We may reasonably assume that he, like them, intended to return to his village when he had accumulated enough cash to purchase land.<sup>54</sup> Following the process of migration described by Badr Dahya and Roger Ballard,

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<sup>50</sup> Sheffield Evening Telegraph, 27 Aug. 1919, 5.

<sup>51</sup> Sultan Mohammed, d. cert.: GRO, Deaths, Sheffield, July–Sept. 1923, vol. 9c, p. 425.

<sup>52</sup> Sheffield Star, 18 July 1923, 3.

<sup>53</sup> Anwar, Myth of Return, 21; Just for Five Years?, ed. Iqbal et al.

<sup>54</sup> This was also the stated aim of Rasool Khan, who, according to his family, had come to Britain fleeing an impending arranged marriage: interview with Glenda Munro, 11 Dec. 2012.

Sultan's family or biradari may also have planned for a young male relative to replace him in the migration chain in order to maintain the flow of cash remittances to the home village.<sup>55</sup> If so, this would also correspond closely to the process described by the Punjab District Gazetteer in 1930 whereby

<ext>Families of smallholders not infrequently send one of their members to seek employment in Peshawar, Bannu, Kohat or Rawalpindi: and at the first sign of scarcity the numbers increase. From the north-east corner of the Chhachh very large numbers of men go out as stokers on the P. and O. and British India boats, and come back shattered in health, but financially sound. Others go as hawkers to Australia, and indeed there are very few parts of the empire which some one in the Chhachh has not visited.<sup>56</sup></ext>

Sultan originated in this same majority Pashtun district and the post office at Hazro lies at its centre. Here Sultan's compensation was paid out, as were cash remittances from Chhachhi Pashtuns working overseas.<sup>57</sup> In this particular instance we see another example of the phenomenon of a South Asian securing waged labour in Britain as a favourable alternative to the British system of sweated maritime labour. The economic connection, by means of remittances, of migrant workers to their families in the subcontinent remained a key feature of the era of chain migration after the Second World War described by both Dahya and Ballard.

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<sup>55</sup> Dahya, 'Nature of Pakistani Ethnicity in Industrial Cities in Britain', 82–6; Ballard, 'Introduction', 9–13.

<sup>56</sup> Punjab District Gazetteer, vol. xxixA, Attock District, 1930 (Lahore, 1932), 61.

<sup>57</sup> Interview with Glenda Munro.

For more independently minded men self-employment could provide an escape route from the frequent drudgery and physical dangers of heavy waged labour. During the period itinerant street or doorstep trading developed as an episodic part of life for former lascars in Britain. A willingness to engage in some form of petty trade from selling ‘Indian toffee’ to hawking small wares, market stallholding and the door-to-door peddling of clothing and fabric, especially ‘artificial silk’ (viscose rayon), to British housewives provided a survival strategy when waged work was scarce. After jumping ship, migrants established a firmer footing in Britain by means of small cash loans and advances on food, accommodation and the wherewithal to survive in Britain. These were provided by native–newcomer couples and settler-operated small businesses such as cafés and seamen’s boarding houses.<sup>58</sup> These boarding houses could take the form of officially registered premises regulated by the authorities or informal arrangements in private homes.<sup>59</sup> The anthropologist Sydney Collins’s study undertaken in the late 1940s found this process in operation in South Shields. Here boarding house ‘masters’ assisted newcomers in various ways, including acting as a form of bank entrusted with the savings of their sojourning residents.<sup>60</sup> In 1919 the Nairoollas, a husband and wife partnership, established just such a boarding house for South Asian seamen at 49 High Street, Poplar, in the East End of London. Until the premises were demolished in the late 1930s, the Nairoollas’ boarding house formed the central node of a network that brought former lascars to Sheffield as well as to British port towns in search of work at the

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<sup>58</sup> *Across Seven Seas and Thirteen Rivers*, ed. Adams, 40–8, 184–5.

<sup>59</sup> For example, TNA, 1939 Register, Badloe household, Sheffield, RG 101/3563A/021/42-KIWF.

<sup>60</sup> Sydney Collins, *Coloured Minorities in Britain* (London, 1957), 156.

same rates as their white British counterparts.<sup>61</sup> Among Home Office archives there are records of a number of South Asians, especially Pashtuns, who lodged with the Nairoollas.<sup>62</sup> It appears that they were often the first port of call for police officers wishing to confirm the identity of former lascars claiming British subject status. The Nairoollas' familiarity with the maritime labour market made their boarding house a principal source for T. G. Segrave's report dated 1922 for an India Office committee enquiring into conditions in boarding houses and desertion of lascars.<sup>63</sup> After interviewing Katherine Nairoolla, Segrave noted that proprietors of lascar boarding houses not only provided accommodation but acted as agents and visited ships, encouraging men to desert in order to sign on elsewhere under English rather than Asiatic articles — a point she freely admitted.<sup>64</sup>

The Nairoollas' connection with Sheffield-bound migrants also highlights the kinship links between many of the migrants. For example, one of the Sheffield migrants, Ali Kadir,

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<sup>61</sup> Naqibullah Nairoolla was known to the authorities under various names, including variations of Laitifoolla Nairoolla, Naki Boola, Nagi Buller or simply Nairulla. His wife and business partner, Katherine Nairoolla, was born Catherine Solomons, the daughter of Simeon Solomons, a Jewish bootmaker of Dutch origin: TNA, Census Returns for England, Wales and Scotland 1891, Whitechapel, RG 12/275/34, 9. Naqibullah and Katherine married in 1920 at the Whitechapel Register Office: Latifoolla Nairoolla and Katherine Solomons, m. cert.: GRO, Marriages, Whitechapel, Jan.–Mar. 1920, vol. 1c, p. 348; British History Online, 'Poplar High Street: Public Housing', in Survey of London, xliii–iv (London, 1994), 90–7, at <<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/survey-london/vols43-4/pp90-97>> (accessed 20 Feb. 2017).

<sup>62</sup> For example, TNA, HO 45/13781: Nationality and Naturalisation (including Certificates of British Origin): Special Certificate of Nationality (Coloured Seamen): Ali Kadir or Afssar Khan and Shar Khan, 1930.

<sup>63</sup> BL, India Office Records, L/E/7/1152: Inspection Report by T. G. Segrave, 1 Dec. 1922.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

recorded by the Home Office as originating in northern Punjab, stayed at No. 49 while making a living selling toffee.<sup>65</sup> He left London sometime in 1924 to find work in Sheffield and to live with his brother Warris Khan.<sup>66</sup> The Nairoollas were also the first point of contact for the young Rasool Khan after jumping ship at Tilbury in 1926.<sup>67</sup> According to the testimony of his daughter Doreen, he carried the address of his countryman since joining a ship in India.<sup>68</sup> She recounted how, upon his arrival in London, her father had been unable to find waged employment in London. With a cash loan from the Nairoollas he purchased handkerchiefs in Petticoat Lane market and began street trading to pay his way. Rasool eventually raised enough cash to repay the Nairoollas' loan, and moved to Sheffield to join

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<sup>65</sup> Nationality and Naturalisation (including Certificates of British Origin): Special Certificate of Nationality (Coloured Seamen): Alli Kadir or Afssar Khan and Shar Khan.

<sup>66</sup> The names of these migrants reflect the differences in naming practices that existed between Britain and much of Asia. The men in this study generally followed a patronymic naming tradition by appending their father's given name to their own given name. In their encounters with British officialdom, titles of status (such as Khan, or of clan or tribe such as Waziri) were often also appended to their given names. The mutability of the composition, arrangement and even spelling of an individual's name, combined with the absence of a fixed hereditary surname, makes determining an individual's genealogy and kinship network difficult, or impossible, from births, marriages and deaths sources alone.

<sup>67</sup> Naqibullah's ethnicity, 'a Bumba Khel Pathan from the village [of] Dhudiyal, north of Mansehra in the Hazara district', is known owing to the interest shown in him by earlier academics. His boarding house was 'very much frequented by Pathan sailors, Peshawaris, Chhachhis, and Bangashes'. See G. Morgenstierne and A. Lloyd-James, 'Notes on the Pronunciation of Pashto (Dialect of the Hazara District)', *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, v, 1 (Feb. 1928).

<sup>68</sup> Recorded conversation between Doreen Bahadur and Paul Khan, 2004.

his friend and fellow Pashtun Warris Khan. Again unable to find sufficient regular waged work, Rasool focused his entrepreneurial attentions on numerous trading opportunities, including a regular market stall selling home-made perfume and costume jewellery. In the summer months his daughter Doreen remembered the family sitting around the kitchen table constructing paper kites of the type popular among Pashtuns in the North West Frontier Province and Afghanistan. These would be sold to families in Sheffield's busier parks.<sup>69</sup>

Naturally, some individuals took to the life of the itinerant trader with greater aplomb than others. Travelling drapers such as Munshi Khan and Ali Ahmed Khan traded throughout Yorkshire selling garments and fabric often made of the newly available viscose rayon.<sup>70</sup> Merchandise for pedlars and hawkers of drapery was supplied by an expanding network of British-based South Asian wholesalers.<sup>71</sup> The report of a court hearing in 1939 describes an assault on Moula Bakhsh, 'a wholesale dealer to coloured men, mainly pedlars', by Kapoor Singh, a pedlar and fellow lodger at their boarding house.<sup>72</sup> Here we have an indication, corroborated by Bashir Maan's interviews with inter-war South Asian migrants in Scotland, that such wholesalers facilitated migration by providing the means for men to earn a living

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Munshi Khan and Eva Collins, m. cert.: GRO, Marriages, Chesterfield, Oct.–Dec. 1937, vol. 7b, p. 2127.

<sup>71</sup> Bashir Maan, *The New Scots: The Story of Asians in Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1992), 109–10, 117–18.

<sup>72</sup> *Sheffield Telegraph and Independent*, 29 June 1939. The household comprised Muslims and Sikhs: hawkers of drapery, a bricklayer and a cook. It was headed by the native–newcomer couple Mohammed Asmail and his wife, Ethel: TNA, 1939 Register, Sheffield, RG 101/3587D/017/40-KKCU.



without recourse to an uncertain labour market.<sup>73</sup> It also is likely that Rasool Khan's expanding forays into business with his wife, Elsie (they opened their draper's shop in 1944), also performed the function of supplying local pedlars, such as his friend Munshi Khan, with fabric and garments.<sup>74</sup> The modest prices and credit terms offered by South Asian pedlars allowed young working-class women to emulate the fashionable silk and satin garments of Hollywood and high society.<sup>75</sup> The intimate interaction between native and newcomer in purchasing garments and fabric directly on the doorstep or in the home was quite possibly the means by which some of the South Asians in this study met their future wives. By 1936 the travelling draper Abdul Razaq was living in Barnsley with his intended,<sup>76</sup> while Munshi married Eva Collins in November 1937 at the Methodist Chapel in neighbouring Chesterfield, settling down with his new family in the town.<sup>77</sup>

The willingness to adopt various occupations formed a survival strategy for both sojourners and settlers, whether their preferred activity was proletarian or entrepreneurial. Even for men whose primary activity was waged labour, petty trade remained in reserve for times of economic hardship. For others, such as Rasool Khan, trade was the most desirable

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<sup>73</sup> Maan, *New Scots*, 110.

<sup>74</sup> Recorded conversation between Doreen Bahadur and Paul Khan.

<sup>75</sup> G. Balachandran, *Globalizing Labour? Indian Seafarers and World Shipping, c.1870–1945* (New Delhi, 2012), 188–9; J. B. Priestley, *English Journey: Being a Rambling but Truthful Account of What One Man Saw and Heard and Felt and Thought during a Journey through England during the Autumn of the Year 1933* (Kingswood, 1934), 401.

<sup>76</sup> Abdul Razaq and Janet Saxon, m. cert.: GRO, Marriages, Barnsley, July–Sept. 1936, vol. 9c, p. 742.

<sup>77</sup> Munshi Khan and Eva Collins, m. cert.

option, meeting a desire for increased independence and perhaps enhancing social capital among kin and countrymen. For those individuals for whom trade was a preference, waged labour could be their fall-back position. The 1939 Register shows even the entrepreneurial Rasool employed as a boiler firer, perhaps taking advantage of his maritime stokehold skills during the increased wartime demand for labour in the ‘Steel City’.<sup>78</sup> Either way, it was the men’s creativity in developing employment strategies, not to mention their recognition of potential opportunities, that led them to break the ties of the Asiatic articles imposed by the British merchant marine. Rather than simply being victims of imperialism, the individuals who make up this study exhibited a sense of agency which clearly demonstrates the ‘wiggle room’ they created within the inconsistencies, conflicts and contradictions of imperial structures.

## IV

### MARRIAGE AND BELONGING

As the anthropologist Alison Shaw noted, migration to Britain from the Indian subcontinent was, until the 1970s, an overwhelmingly male phenomenon. The 1961 Census summary for Sheffield indicates that, of the 582 Pakistanis in the city, only sixteen were female.<sup>79</sup> As the interviews conducted by Adams in the 1980s demonstrate, this migration was imbued, at least in part, by a spirit of adventure among single men mostly aged in their early to middle

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<sup>78</sup> TNA, 1939 Register, Khan household, Sheffield, RG 101/3551I/003/11-KISB.

<sup>79</sup> Alison Shaw, ‘Kinship, Cultural Preference and Immigration: Consanguineous Marriage among British Pakistanis’, *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vii, 2 (2001), 322–3. For Indians, there were 136 males to 76 females: *Census 1961: England and Wales, County Report, Yorkshire, West Riding* (London, 1963), 54.

twenties.<sup>80</sup> They lodged with native–newcomer couples, in multiple-occupancy lodging houses sometimes accommodating fellow migrants, or with native working-class families. Owing to the ‘myth of return’ it is unlikely that many men’s ambitions for British sojourning extended to marriage. Indeed, the 1939 Register indicates that a number of men were, like Sultan Mohammed, already married when they arrived in the Sheffield area.<sup>81</sup> Nevertheless, a significant proportion of newcomers did marry or form sexual partnerships with white British natives. Of the approximately 148 identified migrants living in the Sheffield area with Muslim names or names originating in South Asia, the GRO records indicate that fifty-nine individuals married there while there were also eighteen unmarried couples with or without children. There were also a number of couples who married elsewhere and moved to Sheffield. These figures strongly suggest that, unless South Asian migrants were particularly successful in obtaining marriage partners in the Sheffield area, there were many sojourners who do not appear in the GRO records.<sup>82</sup>

Even if we confine our attentions to the GRO records of marriages, this study, in an attempt to situate the Sheffield experience within the national context of marriages between natives of Britain and Muslim-named newcomers, has revealed about three thousand native–newcomer marriages in England, Wales and Scotland during the period from 1916 to 1947 (see [Map](#)). There are no definitive figures for Britain’s South Asian population during the

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<sup>80</sup> *Across Seven Seas and Thirteen Rivers*, ed. Adams, 143.

<sup>81</sup> For example, TNA, 1939 Register, Jobar household, Sheffield, RG 101/3562C/009/12-KIVY.

<sup>82</sup> At the time of writing, about half the migrants and settlers have been identified by GRO marriage records. This study excludes Indian students at the University of Sheffield unless they married or had children in the Sheffield area.

period, and contemporary observers estimated the figure for various dates within the period at about seven thousand.<sup>83</sup> However, the 2901 marriages located in this study suggest that this may have been something of an underestimate. They also indicate that migration and settlement of Muslims in Britain was well under way before 1948, the ‘green light’ of the British Nationality Act and the era of the fare-paying long-distance passenger. The distribution of marriages confirms existing historiography in the sense that the greatest concentrations lay within major ports. However, the clusters of native–newcomer marriages within other inland towns and cities demonstrate that, even within this early period, Sheffield was not alone in hosting non-white migration and settlement. Another interesting point that can be drawn from the national GRO data is that, apart from Birmingham and, to a lesser extent, Nottingham, the post-war centres of ‘New Commonwealth’ immigration, such as Bradford and Leicester, had yet to establish themselves.

Apart from Tabili’s study of migration and settlement in the port of South Shields, the process of historical migration and settlement, especially the move inland, has received little attention from migration scholars. Further research is needed into the sites of such settlement in order to investigate the lives not only of the migrants themselves but also of the communities they joined. In Scotland such settlements include the ports of Edinburgh and Dundee and the inland industrial towns of Scotland’s central belt. In England significant clusters of marriages occur in all the coastal ports of the north-east, including Tynemouth, Newcastle and Sunderland. The port of Hull appears as a significant site of settlement and marriage, as is confirmed by data from the 1939 Register. The inland port of Salford, neighbouring Manchester and the Lancashire hinterland hosted significant migration and

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<sup>83</sup> Visram, *Asians in Britain*, 224.

settlement and warrant intensive investigation. Inland, Birmingham and Coventry in the west midlands are significant. The entirety of south Wales is worthy of much further investigation as a site of settlement, well beyond the confines of the often cited Bute Town area of Cardiff, more commonly known as Tiger Bay.<sup>84</sup> It is important to stress that, owing to the methodology of the study, these numbers are bare minimums based on common Muslim names, and further, more intensive research may address this problem.<sup>85</sup> Neither does the data include co-habiting couples or those who, for example, married exclusively in an unregistered ceremony according to Islamic law. Nevertheless, even many of these couples can be located by means of the GRO registers for the births of their children. Thus, the method of interrogating digital GRO databases has proved highly effective in locating clusters of state-sanctioned marriages and their offspring from which we might infer concentrations of both sojourners and settlers. However, a shortcoming of the GRO records for England and Wales is that, owing to the prevailing standards by which marriage certificates were completed, they seldom contain data about the occupations of brides. However, it may be inferred from the occupations of their fathers, their home addresses and a knowledge of the historical demography of the city that the majority were from working-class families. Thankfully, the public release in 2015 of the 1939 Register dataset for England and

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<sup>84</sup> The classic study of the district and source for much migration history is Kenneth Little, *Negroes in Britain: A Study of Racial Relations in English Society* (London, 1948).

<sup>85</sup> The data does not include those unions where the bride or groom had an unusual name or one poorly transliterated, or translated by the registrar from the spoken word from, for example, Pashto or Punjabi. On arrival in Britain many of the men were not literate in either their native language or English. For the sake of continuity, the names of the men in this study have been preserved in the way they were originally recorded by the registrar.

Wales is a boon to twentieth-century migration research, with its potential for adding much-needed empirical precision.<sup>86</sup>

For most of the individuals identified by this study the transformation of their lives from sojourning migrant to settler was their marriage to, or partnership with, a native of Britain and the birth of their children. A married man's new family no doubt reduced the influence of the 'myth of return' upon him, refocusing his attention away from his land of birth and towards settling down in Britain. Increasing financial responsibilities to a growing family also likely reduced or even terminated a settler's cash remittances to his South Asian family. Nevertheless, despite this turn from sojourning to settlement, rather than breaking the chains of migration, native–newcomer marriage appears to have reinforced them. Marriages, whether or not validated by the state, provided secure family-centred safe havens for new arrivals and anchor points for further kinship-based chain migration.

I have already discussed the phenomenon of individuals in transition between maritime and land-based employment, but there are numerous examples that also demonstrate the crucial role that native–newcomer couples played in the South Asian settlement of Britain. Some wives appear to have performed the informal role of landladies, turning family homes into lodgings for friends or kinsmen of their husbands who had decided to try their luck in Britain. The 1939 Register allows us to drill down to data at household level to gain insights into the domestic arrangements of native–newcomer households. In the Sheffield area, as in other Yorkshire towns, we can see households in which a native–

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<sup>86</sup> The dataset allows glimpses of settlement at the level of the individual household and recorded the names, ages and occupations of all household occupants, but, unfortunately, not their country of birth: Holland, '1939 Register'.

newcomer couple accommodated another migrant. For example, Rasool Khan's friend (or kinsman) Warris Khan, a steelworks boiler firer, and his partner, Iris, accommodated Haslam Khan, a 39-year-old colliery boiler firer. Mohammed Asmail, a hawker of drapery, and his wife, Ethel, accommodated four men, possibly on a commercial basis. With them lived a Sikh hawker of drapery and three Muslims: another hawker of drapery, a bricklayer and a cook.<sup>87</sup> Contemporary observers noted a similar process elsewhere in Britain. In 1925 the inspector of immigration for Glasgow reported that the twenty Indian men in the city of which he was aware had deserted their ships at various ports across Britain including Bristol, Liverpool, London and Glasgow. He noted that 'the lascars who came here first give shelter and protection to subsequent deserters, take them to mining districts where they obtain employment in mines and ironworks, and when they learn English, they apply for a pedlar's certificate'. As we have seen, this description, although underestimating the numbers involved, mirrored the process taking place in the Sheffield area.<sup>88</sup> Similarly, the social researcher Phyllis Young observed in 1944 that many South Asian seafarers disembarking in London already knew other 'coloured men' in the area who, having given up the sea, rented a house with their white wife and 'turned it into an unofficial lodging house'.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> TNA, 1939 Register, Khan household, Sheffield, RG 101/3550H/006/42-KIRT; Asmail household, Sheffield, RG 101/3587D/017/40-KKCU.

<sup>88</sup> TNA, HO 45/12314/476761/41: Aliens: Coloured Alien Seamen: Registration, 10 Sept. 1925. Shazreen Khan, whose granddaughter related some of his story for this research, lived with his wife, Florrie, in the Glasgow area at this time and was most likely a part of this group of men: interview with Angela Khan, 2 Sept. 2014.

<sup>89</sup> TNA, MT 9/3952: Report on Investigation into Conditions of the Coloured Population in the Stepney Area, 1944.

Additionally, analysis of Sheffield area marriage certificates shows that, like Maggie Amidulla's mother, some of the women in this study appear to have been letting spare rooms to South Asian lodgers. This may well be how they, their friends or their relations met their Indian husbands. At the time of his marriage in 1928, Rasool Khan was lodging on the Manor Estate with Hilda Khan (née Johnson) and her husband, Willy Khan.<sup>90</sup> After the couple's move to nearby Rotherham the same house was home, in 1930, to Maria Cooke, who married Rasool's friend Yousaff Aboo Khuresee.<sup>91</sup> Their marriage certificate also provides an insight into the developing social network among natives and newcomers as the witnesses at the register office were Rasool and Ivy Badloe, the wife of his Pashtun friend Jim Badloe (also known as Noor Mohamed).<sup>92</sup> Jim previously lodged at the Washford Road boarding house of Julia Peters and her daughter Adeline.<sup>93</sup> Rasool also met his wife, Elsie, Julia's granddaughter (see [Plate](#)), while visiting a friend at this address, while Adeline married Somander Khan, another Pashtun, in 1923.<sup>94</sup> There are a number of marriage certificates in which the bride and groom share the same home address. Even discounting certificates for

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<sup>90</sup> Rasool Khan and Elsie Peters, m. cert.; Willy Khan and Hilda Johnson, m. cert.

<sup>91</sup> Yousaff Aboo Khuresee and Maria Gertrude Cooke, m. cert.: GRO, Marriages, Sheffield, Apr.–June 1930, vol. 9c, p. 1155.

<sup>92</sup> Jim Badloe and Ivy Swain, m. cert.: GRO, Marriages, Sheffield, Apr.–June 1930, vol. 9c, p. 1384.

<sup>93</sup> Recorded conversation between Doreen Bahadur and Paul Khan.

<sup>94</sup> Somander Khan and Adeline Peters, m. cert.: GRO, Marriages, Sheffield, July–Sept. 1923, vol. 9c, p. 984; recorded conversation between Doreen Bahadur and Paul Khan. Adeline Peters and Elsie Peters were the daughter and granddaughter respectively of the mixed couple John Peters and Julia Ross. Peters, a black African, was born in the British colony of Natal. He and his English wife arrived in Sheffield in the mid 1890s after living in Nottingham.



church weddings when joint addresses were used to avoid payment of fees for reading banns in two parishes, there were still fourteen marriages that took place in register offices with no need for such arrangements. The marriage of Somander Khan and Adeline Peters is one such relationship likely to have begun in the same boarding house between landlady and lodger. As Tabili points out, ‘relations between migrant lodgers and native landladies often did segue into the most common, or at least best-documented role native women played in migrants’ experience, that of wife’.<sup>95</sup> Nationwide, initially in the major ports, then further inland as this article demonstrates, these domestic alliances between native and newcomer formed anchor points for chains of kinship migration. In doing so, they also provided safe havens, accommodation and a degree of acculturation into British working-class life for new migrants. Native–newcomer marriages often continued to perform this role until the period of mass migration in the 1950s and 1960s. This is borne out by the fact that most of today’s Pakistani and Bangladeshi settlers (including those in the Sheffield area) originate in the same distinct geographical districts (such as Chhachh, Mirpur and Sylhet) as the men who arrived in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s.<sup>96</sup> Moreover, a native of Kashmir remembered being accommodated (along with seven other migrants) by his friend and his English wife upon his arrival in Sheffield in 1961.<sup>97</sup> This continuity of the role of native–newcomer family

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<sup>95</sup> Tabili, *Global Migrants, Local Culture*, 154.

<sup>96</sup> Roger Ballard, ‘The Context and Consequences of Migration: Jullundur and Mirpur Compared’, *New Community*, xi (1983), 122–6; Roger Ballard, ‘A Case of Capital-Rich Under-Development: The Paradoxical Consequences of Successful Transnational Entrepreneurship from Mirpur’, *Contributions to Indian Sociology*, xxxvii (2003), 57–61; interview with Imam Sheik Mohammad Ismail, 14 Sept. 2016.

<sup>97</sup> Walayat, *Made in England*, 30.

household is also apparent in interviews with men who settled both before and after the Second World War. Many were able to find lodgings with kinsmen or countrymen with native British wives.<sup>98</sup>

The quotidian spaces of work and community brought non-white newcomers into regular contact with natives of Britain. Marriage certificates reveal a growing network of contacts in the names of both their native wives and the witnesses whom they chose and, just as importantly, who agreed to validate relationships that straddled the racial, religious and cultural divide. The names of witnesses show the migrants drawing ‘outsiders’ into their social networks, not only by marrying outside their religious, ethnic and kinship groups, but as part of a much broader network of friends, neighbours, workmates and colleagues. Carina E. Wray, however, has demonstrated that, despite the horizontal relationships with their neighbourhoods described here, mixed couples frequently faced problems at the hands of the Home, India and Colonial offices of the British state.<sup>99</sup> Official interpretations of ‘race’ and citizenship were often inconsistent and expedient, being contingent upon shifting rivalries between civil servants and their departments.<sup>100</sup> The couples often endured troublesome long-term dealings with the relevant departments of the state, not to mention the various social reformers and moral entrepreneurs who sought to reduce the incidence of births of ‘half-

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<sup>98</sup> Across Seven Seas and Thirteen Rivers, ed. Adams, 48, 75, 98, 117, 133, 137, 150; Just for Five Years?, ed. Iqbal et al., ch. 2.

<sup>99</sup> Carina E. Ray, “‘The White Wife Problem’: Sex, Race and the Contested Politics of Repatriation to Interwar British West Africa’, *Gender and History*, xxi (2009).

<sup>100</sup> For example, Lane, ‘Political Imperatives of Bureaucracy and Empire’; Laura Tabili, ‘Empire Is the Enemy of Love: Edith Noor’s Progress and Other Stories’, *Gender and History*, xvii (2005).

caste' children.<sup>101</sup> While the vertical relationship of couples to the state has been examined in some depth, further research into the horizontal relationships between couples, their families and their neighbourhoods is required to add nuance and texture to the everyday lived experience of native–newcomer couples. Such social networks, straddling racial categories imposed by empire, could play an important role by helping couples to endure the attentions of state officials. Despite his British subject status, Abdul Gunni, a ship's engineer hailing from Punjab and working trawlers out of Fleetwood, was registered by the local police under the Aliens Order 1920. After a period during which he lived under surveillance and was required to notify the police of his movements regularly, Abdul's Sheffield-born wife, Winifred, with the encouragement and support of her friends, insisted on 'the necessity to establish his position as a British subject'. Her intervention and persistence in defending his British status eventually persuaded the Home Office to overturn their original ruling.<sup>102</sup> The case of the Gunnis provides an example not only of the role wives often played as advocates for their husbands, but also of their friendship network continuing to support the couple despite Winifred's marriage to (in the words of the police and the Home Office) a 'coloured alien'.

Native–newcomer couples in which the groom was viewed as 'coloured' also faced hostility and resistance from local officials in Sheffield. A newspaper feature from 1938 on the work of W. Fergusson, the superintendent registrar for Sheffield, indicates that couples

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<sup>101</sup> Mark Christian, 'The Fletcher Report 1930: A Historical Case Study of Contested Black Mixed Heritage Britishness', *Journal of Historical Sociology*, xxi (2008).

<sup>102</sup> TNA, HO 45/15183: Nationality and Naturalisation (including Certificates of British Origin): Special Certificate of Nationality (Coloured Seamen): Abdul Gunni, 1933.

were sometimes actively discouraged from entering into ‘mixed marriages’. Fergusson candidly remarked that he considered it part of his job ‘to draw the parties aside and give certain advice’, with the result that ‘it has often happened that the English girl has withdrawn from her intention to marry a coloured man’.<sup>103</sup> Notwithstanding Fergusson’s ‘certain advice’, we still have records of fifty-nine local couples who were prepared to defy the racial logic of local functionaries.

British-born wives often played a significant role in overcoming these hurdles as day-to-day advocates and administrators of the men’s individual, and sometimes collective, affairs. Apart from the unwanted attentions of the state, newly married women also had to deal with sometimes fraught relationships with their own native families. Observing the attitudes of parents towards a daughter’s marriage to a non-white partner, Collins noted that, in the early months of marriage, couples often became estranged from the parents of the bride. However, he found that this estrangement usually ended with reconciliation, the terms of which varied according to social class, being ‘less unfavourable in the lower and more unfavourable in the middle class’.<sup>104</sup> Collins also found that wives facilitated their husband’s desired level of acculturation into their new British surroundings and became their business partners in cafés and seamen’s boarding houses, not to mention fulfilling their more traditional roles as mothers and housewives.<sup>105</sup> Rozina Visram and Caroline Adams have drawn similar conclusions about the role of natives in the successful settlement of South Asian newcomers. Visram highlighted the role of ‘the many white women, friends, wives and

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<sup>103</sup> Sheffield Daily Independent, 29 Oct. 1938.

<sup>104</sup> Collins, *Coloured Minorities in Britain*, 47.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, 74, 192.

helpmates without whose support these migrants would not have been able to establish themselves so successfully'.<sup>106</sup> For Adams, many of the women who closely associated with South Asian migrants 'were loyal and generous' and that 'without [their] help and support the early pioneers would not have settled so successfully'.<sup>107</sup> For the native wives of South Asian newcomers this role continued until the years Alison Shaw described as those of 'family reunion' from the late 1960s onwards with the arrival of wives, children and female relatives born on the subcontinent.<sup>108</sup>

Finally, and worthy of further investigation, are the marriages of a small number of higher-status migrants and settlers in the Sheffield area, including medical practitioners and some Sheffield University students. These individuals appear to have been willing to cross the class divide as well as that which arose out of imperial notions of racial difference. Here we have evidence of the sons of high-status Hindu and Muslim landowners, judges and merchants marrying the working-class daughters of steelworkers, blacksmiths, spring makers and railwaymen.<sup>109</sup>

## <h1>V

### AN EVERYDAY TOLERANCE?</h1>

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<sup>106</sup> Visram, *Asians in Britain*, 258.

<sup>107</sup> *Across Seven Seas and Thirteen Rivers*, ed. Adams, 48.

<sup>108</sup> Alison Shaw, *Kinship and Continuity: Pakistani Families in Britain* (Abingdon, 2006), 37.

<sup>109</sup> For example, GRO, *Marriages*, Sheffield, Jan. 1916–Dec. 1947, Bishambra Dass Malhotra and Doris Wells, Jan.–Mar. 1938, vol. 9c, p. 719; Saad Khalil Effat and Doris Jackson, Apr.–June 1934, vol. 9c, p. 1366.

But what of the everyday life of the neighbourhoods into which migrants entered, and within which a small but significant number settled? Both working-class memoirists and social historians such as Andrew Davies have described in detail a tight-knit northern working-class way of life, a product of overcrowded homes and scant disposable income.<sup>110</sup> Richard Hoggart's analysis of working-class life in Yorkshire suggested that, for better or for worse, 'home may be private, but the front door opens out of the living-room on to the street, and when you go down the one step or use it as a seat on a warm evening you become part of the life of the neighbourhood'.<sup>111</sup> For Ross McKibbin, a working-class neighbourhood of the period was defined by the street, which was 'not merely a thoroughfare; it was a crowded array of institutions designed for entertainment, sociability, and courting . . . street-life in an "urban village" was known for its colour and incident, its capacity to divert and fascinate. It was always remembered with affection . . .'.<sup>112</sup> Doreen Bahadur, recollecting her working-class childhood in the 1930s and 1940s, communicated a warm sense of the neighbourhood, the friendships forged in the tightly packed streets and courtyards of Sheffield's East End, and the sense of her family's thorough integration into its everyday life.<sup>113</sup> Here, weather permitting, much of the neighbourhood's social life took place in the street. In this environment newcomers would inevitably have been in regular contact with native

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<sup>110</sup> Andrew Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty: Working-Class Culture in Salford and Manchester, 1900–1939* (Buckingham, 1992), 109–10.

<sup>111</sup> Richard Hoggart, *The Uses of Literacy: Aspects of Working-Class Life, with Special Reference to Publications and Entertainments* (London, 1957), 51.

<sup>112</sup> Ross McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures: England, 1918–1951* (Oxford, 1998), 186; Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty*, 185.

<sup>113</sup> Recorded conversation between Doreen Bahadur and Paul Khan.

neighbours and the life of the street. Thus, a working-class culture of the public space and street-based sociability likely played a large role in the process of integrating newcomers into the neighbourhoods they inhabited. Regular opportunities for social contact between men and women existed in Sheffield, a city with a tradition of women working in the cutlery and flatware industry alongside men.<sup>114</sup> Such social exchange between men and women was also significantly increased during both world wars when thousands of young working-class women were recruited into munitions work.<sup>115</sup> Despite migrants having been raised in the cultures of the Indian subcontinent, which often enforced strict gender segregation (for example, Pashtunwali, the ethical code of the Pashtuns), the informality and directness of relations among young working-class men and women noted by both McKibbin and Davies facilitated interaction between young natives and newcomers.<sup>116</sup> The GRO records show that thirty-one couples lived in the same neighbourhood, in the same street or even next door to their future husbands. This proximity strongly supports the argument that the quotidian life of the neighbourhood played a large role in supporting positive native–newcomer relationships.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup> Gill Booth, *Diamonds in Brown Paper: The Colourful Lives and Hard Times of Sheffield's Famous Buffer Lasses* (Sheffield, 1988), 3, 33–6.

<sup>115</sup> McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 109–11.

<sup>116</sup> James W. Spain, *The Pathan Borderland* (The Hague, 1963), 79–80; Davies, *Leisure, Gender and Poverty*, 99–103; McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 185.

<sup>117</sup> For example, GRO, *Marriages*, Sheffield, Jan. 1916–Dec. 1947, Ahamed Wosman and Constance Goodwin, Jan.–Mar. 1919, vol. 9c, p. 885; Maherban Shah and Annie Dunn, Oct.–Dec. 1924, vol. 9c, p. 1360a.

As we have seen, South Asian newcomers by and large arrived in the Sheffield area seeking employment in the metalworking and coal trades. These huge manufacturing and mining industries supported an industrial working-class culture proudly and profoundly focused on work. For men, McKibbin observed, ‘the workplace and its social relationships were irreplaceable’. Here, ‘work was life’.<sup>118</sup> Helen Smith, in her historical analysis of working-class masculinity in the north of England, contends that, owing to the nature of their work, her subjects were ‘imbued with a strong sense of security in their own masculinity’.<sup>119</sup> Her analysis contrasts somewhat with the compromised white masculinity, ruptured by the experience of the First World War, that Lucy Bland identifies as the root of working-class antagonism to ‘mixed’ couples.<sup>120</sup> According to Bland, ‘myths of black sexual potency were widespread’, although the working-class men who subscribed to these myths remain silent in her analysis. This lacuna in cultural history means that we are asked to ‘speculate that their fury at miscegenation . . . lay in its perceived negation of part of their sense of self-worth’.<sup>121</sup> In contrast, Smith describes the robust but tolerant sociability that developed in collieries and steelworks, precisely the environments in which non-white newcomers were employed, where ‘men were reliant on their mates for safety and even their life’.<sup>122</sup> Workers in the

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<sup>118</sup> McKibbin, *Classes and Cultures*, 162.

<sup>119</sup> Helen Smith, *Masculinity, Class and Same-Sex Desire in Industrial England, 1895–1957* (Basingstoke, 2015), 94.

<sup>120</sup> Lucy Bland, ‘White Women and Men of Colour: Miscegenation Fears in Britain after the Great War’, *Gender and History*, xvii (2005), 37–8.

<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>122</sup> Smith, *Masculinity, Class and Same-Sex Desire in Industrial England*, 94.



heavy industries, often organized into gangs and working in dangerous trades, developed a culture of mutuality essential for the safety and relative prosperity of the group.<sup>123</sup> Moreover, as Hoggart discusses at length, this quotidian culture was imbued with a sense of acceptance of difference, regardless of prevailing standards of ‘respectability’, provided that individuals were willing to ‘muck in’ and play their part.<sup>124</sup>

The case of Sultan Mohammed, although tragic in its outcome, bears this out. Following Sultan’s accidental death while working at Beighton colliery, his trade union, the National Amalgamated Union of Labour, ensured that his employers paid compensation to Sultan’s family in India. The sum of £300 — the maximum allowable — was awarded to his wife and two young sons according to the terms of the Workmen’s Compensation Act 1906. The only deduction made was to reimburse Carumeli Khan, his workmate and countryman, £25 15s. for the burial and ornamented stone marker. Sultan’s case appears here as an isolated incident, and further investigation is needed into similar cases. Nevertheless, the response to his death demonstrates that, away from the highly racialized environment of the decks, docksides and shipping offices controlled by the British merchant marine and the National Sailors’ and Firemen’s Union, Sultan was able to work alongside his white British workmates. While the families of lascar seafarers were likely to receive little or no recompense following the death or serious injury of their husbands, fathers and sons at work,

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<sup>123</sup> The culture of workplace-derived mutuality is described in McGeown’s vivid account of life as a northern steelworker during the period: Patrick McGeown, *Heat the Furnace Seven Times More* (London, 1967), 95–7.

<sup>124</sup> Hoggart, *Uses of Literacy*, 82.

Sultan, through his non-maritime trade union, was ensured parity with white workers under the law.<sup>125</sup>

Away from work and in the private sphere of hearth and home, data gleaned from the 1939 Register and Sheffield's burgess rolls for 1945 shows a number of households headed by native couples or native individuals with Muslim-named men lodging with them. Some premises were large commercial hotels and lodging houses with a diverse occupancy, but working-class family households accommodating a single Muslim-named lodger are also evident. These lodgers were often of the same occupation type as the household's male head, possibly indicating that they were, or had been, workmates.<sup>126</sup> Additionally, the 1939 Register shows a small number of examples where the dynamic of native–newcomer interaction is reversed and we have white lodgers in working-class Muslim households.<sup>127</sup> Mixing at this level within the intimate private space of the family home, 'when lodgers, like boarders, often ate at the family table', indicates a significant degree of mutual trust and acceptance despite our current assumptions that insurmountable barriers of race, religion and

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<sup>125</sup> Tim Carter, *Merchant Seamen's Health, 1860–1960: Medicine, Technology, Shipowners and the State in Britain* (Woodbridge, 2014), 83–4; BL, India Office Records, L/E/7/1321, file 4570: Workmen's Compensation Act 1906.

<sup>126</sup> For example, TNA, 1939 Register, Davis household, Sheffield, RG 101/3551A/005/3-KIRV; burgess roll for Sheffield, Attercliffe Division (C), Oct. 1945: Mary MacMillan and Abdo Mohamed, 18 Attercliffe Common; George Windle and Abul Hamid, 24 Attercliffe Common; Elizabeth Jennings, Henry Jennings, Muckbil Said and George Grayson, 143 Attercliffe Common; Thomas O'Connor and Sultan Nugi, 6 Clay Street; Ernest Brownhill, Clara Brownhill and Ali Mohamed, 30 Ebury Street; Rose Perry and Ali Ahmed, 35 Ebury Street.

<sup>127</sup> For example, TNA, 1939 Register, Wosman household, Sheffield, RG 101/3565I/008/39-KIXC; Khan household, Sheffield, RG 101/3562E/002/6-KIWA.

culture existed between white working-class natives and non-white newcomers.<sup>128</sup> This evidence supports Tabili's claim that the increasing number of migrants living in the homes of Britain's working-class natives during the twentieth century should 'modify any view of British society as culturally static, closed and homogeneous, and of British working people as intolerant and inward-looking'.<sup>129</sup> Robert Roberts observed the development of a new tolerance towards ethnic diversity developing among working- and lower-middle-class northerners in the years after the First World War. He described 'a growing maturity in mass attitudes towards strangers and a decrease in that xenophobia rife before and (of course) during the war. Italians, Indian seamen, the so-called Lascars, with small groups of coloured people — to all the first decade after the war brought toleration'.<sup>130</sup> For Hoggart, an outlook that eschewed strong ideological allegiances lay at the heart of working-class tolerance, sociability and mutuality. Rather, it was a pragmatic and 'unidealistic tolerance', a 'taking-life-as-it-comes, a goodwill-humanism' necessarily combined with a 'slowness to moral indignation' that informed the 'live and let live' outlook of the northern working class of the period.<sup>131</sup> Perhaps in consequence, there is no evidence during this period of any defensive clustering in Sheffield of South Asian or Muslim households similar to that experienced by

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<sup>128</sup> Tabili, *Global Migrants, Local Culture*, 114.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>130</sup> Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum: Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century* (Harmondsworth, 1974), 221.

<sup>131</sup> Hoggart, *Uses of Literacy*, 79, 146.

British cities from the mid 1950s.<sup>132</sup> Unlike the family migrations of east European Jews at the end of the nineteenth century, the early South Asian migration to Britain was almost entirely composed of men. This highly gendered pattern of migration appears to have had a significant effect on how migrants interacted with natives. Within this new context, the relationships newcomers forged were as likely to be with natives as with other Indians.

In so far as non-white newcomers were building social networks with working-class natives, aiding integration and acculturation, this everyday tolerance does not appear to have demanded the total assimilation and absorption of newcomers into British society. Interviews with the families of mixed couples and the findings of Collins's study (begun in 1949) both clearly demonstrate that cultural origins and religious belief still played a significant, albeit modified, role in settled men's lives.<sup>133</sup> Sheffield's first mosque was officially registered in 1946 at the dwelling occupied by the Yemeni steelworker Mohamed Abdulla and his English wife, Doreen.<sup>134</sup> Some of the children of the native–newcomer unions were raised as Muslims, while some of the wives in both this and Collins's study adopted the Muslim faith of their husbands.<sup>135</sup> A number of Sheffield wives (whether converts to Islam or not) agreed to their children being raised in the Muslim faith or receiving some Islamic education. One

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<sup>132</sup> John Rex and Robert Moore, *Race, Community and Conflict: A Study of Sparkbrook* (London, 1974), 19–27.

<sup>133</sup> Sydney F. Collins, 'The Social Position of White and "Half-Caste" Women in Colored Groupings in Britain', *American Sociological Review*, xvi (1951).

<sup>134</sup> *London Gazette*, 20 July 1971, 23; interview with members of Sheffield's Pakistan Muslim Centre, 21 Dec. 2015; Mohamed Abdulla and Doreen Gilliver, m. cert.: GRO, Marriages, Sheffield, Apr.–June 1943, vol. 9c, p. 1277.

<sup>135</sup> Collins, *Coloured Minorities in Britain*, ch. 9.

interviewee remembered receiving, in Sheffield in the late 1930s, Islamic after-school instruction together with other children.<sup>136</sup> There is evidence for the Sheffield area that some women retained and maintained their own religious beliefs and practices while making accommodation for their husbands' religious and cultural requirements, for example, restricting or ending the consumption of pork or alcohol in the home.<sup>137</sup> Indeed, one third of the marriages of Muslim migrants in this study were conducted according to the rites of a Christian church or chapel. Also of significance is that two of the marriages within our time period were of the children of two earlier mixed marriages. The marriage ceremonies of the adult children (one male, one female) of the earliest mixed couples were also conducted in church. Both marriages were exogamous and to white Sheffield natives.

The evidence presented here suggests that a flexible, often syncretic, approach towards faith and culture, based upon a mutual outlook of tolerance and negotiation, existed between husbands and wives within the private domestic sphere.

## VI

### CONCLUSION

The findings of this study offer new insights and possibilities for the analysis of previously neglected populations of South Asians, particularly those of Muslim heritage, across Britain before 1948. The composition of the South Asian newcomers' social networks has been characterized here as comprising not only their kinsmen (as understood by the existing historiography) but also their wives, native families, friends, neighbours and workmates. Consequently, I argue that it was these wider social networks, made up of both newcomers

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<sup>136</sup> Interview with Derek Khan, 11 Dec. 2012.

<sup>137</sup> Recorded conversation between Doreen Bahadur and Paul Khan; interview with Angela Khan.

and natives, that played a central role in the early settlement of South Asian men, not only in the Sheffield area, but perhaps in Britain as a whole. As demonstrated here, white, mostly working-class, women and men were members of social networks between natives and newcomers bonded by the mutuality of marriage, neighbourliness, friendship and work, thus facilitating integration and settlement.

Moreover, supported by the evidence presented here, I have contended that the role white working-class natives played in migration history suggests the existence of a degree of mutual everyday or informal tolerance towards ethnic difference. In the absence of a substantial body of self-generated working-class writing from the period clearly illuminating this population's attitudes to 'race' and cultural difference in the past, current migration historiography tends to rely on reports of sporadic incidents of group violence. In this way events, particularly the 1919–20 port riots, have become the key indicators of this population's mood and outlook. While a conflict-centred approach to migration history has merit in highlighting historical injustice, it fails to throw light on the attitudes of ordinary people who inhabited the places and periods that did not experience such violence. The data presented here suggests that instances of mutuality and the sharing of intimate domestic spaces between natives and newcomers may also help to illuminate the attitudes of localities and populations in the past, and my research seeks to explore the possibilities presented by this line of historical enquiry.

While South Asian arrivals in Sheffield (as for the rest of Britain) were relatively small in number compared to the post-1948 era, the experience of men arriving after 1948 demonstrates the persistence of the social networks built by their pioneer predecessors. The continuity in the role that native–newcomer couples played as hosts for new arrivals in both periods provides a clear example of this. Thus, it is likely that the growing infrastructure of cultural, social and economic life created by the pioneer settlers and their social networks

helped to support (at least in the early stages) the much larger-scale migration of kinsmen after 1948, as described by Badr Dahya, Muhammad Anwar, Alison Shaw and Roger Ballard. The new data presented here clearly demonstrates that by the time the British Nationality Act 1948 reached the statute book, South Asian migrants, as British subjects, had already been in the Sheffield area for thirty years. Moreover, the number of marriages between natives and Muslims presented by the national data cited in this study raises the possibility that 1948 was not a distinct historical turning point in British migration history. Rather, it may have been a point on a continuum that began during the First World War.

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